

House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

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For immediate release

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Troop Support should be #1 Priority in Congress

El Paso, TX—Representative Silvestre Reyes, Ranking Member on the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, made the following statement today in conjunction with an Armed Services Committee delegation visit to various military installations across the United States.

“Today we had the chance speak to service members who have recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. We talked with active duty troops, National Guard members, Reservists and their families. We had the opportunity to thank them for their courageous service to our country, listen to their concerns, and obtain feedback on issues we can address through our committee.

“Much as we commend the extraordinary service of our military members and their families, their comments suggest that our forces are being stretched to the breaking point. We heard from soldiers who deployed with outdated or malfunctioning equipment. They spoke of a lack of personal protective vests and armored vehicles, back-to-back deployments without enough recuperation and training time in between, and base family support programs that were being reduced or eliminated due to budget cuts.

“The common thread in the comments from the troops is that there was insufficient planning for the aftermath of the Iraq invasion. This has led to a severe operational deployment rate that could cause a recruiting and retention crisis.

“I call on President Bush and the congressional leadership to do whatever is necessary to ensure that our troops have what they need to prevail in the war in Iraq and in the war on terrorism.

“I have made a number of recommendations to Chairman Hunter to address these issues. It is very important that we continue to do everything possible to support our men and women in uniform and their families. While this war continues, this should be our number one priority in Congress.”

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